



## NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release:  
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### **Special Olympics Oklahoma Athlete Receives International Recognition**

*Chris Paynter, Edmond Special Olympics Oklahoma Athlete  
named International Athlete of the Year*

*Tulsa, Oklahoma.* On November 3, 2011 Chris Paynter, Special Olympics Oklahoma athlete, was named the International Athlete of the Year. The award was presented by the Law Enforcement International Executive Council during the International Law Enforcement Torch Run Conference in Calgary, Canada. The Athlete of the Year award was created to recognize outstanding Special Olympics athletes who have contributed to the success of the Law Enforcement Torch Run on a local, state or national level. Paynter is the first Special Olympics athlete to receive this prestigious international award.



Paynter was recognized during a ceremony at the International Law Enforcement Torch Run Conference held November 3 through 5, 2011. Dean and Ellen Paynter, Chris's parents, and members of the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Torch Run Committee were guests at the awards ceremony. Law Enforcement representatives from around the world were in attendance at the conference.

Chris Paynter resides in Edmond, Oklahoma and is a member of the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Torch Run Committee. He has helped raise awareness and funds for Oklahoma Law Enforcement Torch Run for more than 16 years. Paynter has been competing as a Special Olympics Oklahoma athlete since he was 8 years old. He has recruited other Special Olympics athletes to participate in fundraising including Polar Plunges, Tip-A-Cops, Cops on Doughnut Shops and other regional fundraising events. Paynter has been invited to more than 70 speaking engagements including the Law Enforcement Torch Run State Kickoff luncheon and the International Law Enforcement Torch Run Conference. He was one of only ten Special Olympics athletes invited to carry the Flame of Hope on the Final Leg for the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Boise, Idaho.

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### Special Olympics Oklahoma

The Mission of Special Olympics is to provide a year-round program of sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Today 9,500 Special Olympics Oklahoma athletes participate in more than 120 sports competitions and training clinic opportunities every year. Competition is offered in 16 official sports. There are thousands of volunteer opportunities available. Visit [www.sook.org](http://www.sook.org) or call 918-481-1234 for more information.

### Law Enforcement Torch Run

The Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) is an international charity made up of law enforcement agencies that raise money for Special Olympics. LETR was adopted as an official charity of the International Association of Chiefs of Police in 1981 and was begun in Oklahoma in 1986. The mission was simple: Carry the Flame of Hope to the State Summer Games. As the years passed, the mission grew to include fundraising and increasing public awareness of Special Olympics Oklahoma. Today, LETR is the guardian of the Flame of Hope for the Special Olympics Oklahoma Summer and Winter Games and actively raises money and public awareness. Visit [www.sook.org](http://www.sook.org) to learn more.